

March 2012

# THE tribal CONNECTION

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State Conservationist, Roylene Rides at the Door

## Important Dates to Remember

**March 29, 2012**

EQIP's Energy, High Tunnel and Organic Initiatives Period 1: Obligation Due

**March 30, 2012**

EQIP's Energy, High Tunnel and Organic Initiatives Period 2: Sign-up Cutoff and Ranking Due

**March 12-April 14, 2012**

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Sign-up Period

Contact your local NRCS field office or tribal liaison for more info.

**Rebecca Stuart Toupal**

(Tribal Liaison, East Area)

509.343.2274

**Robin Slate**

(Tribal Liaison, West Area)

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## Update from Roylene

A message from Washington State Conservationist Roylene Rides at the Door.

**W**e may only be two months into the New Year, but here at the NRCS, we're already well on our way through fiscal year 2012.

We only have seven months left in our fiscal year – seven months in which to obligate, implement, partner, learn and change people's lives. With that in mind – I am really excited about what's on the horizon for the NRCS.

We've received our state's budget allocations with adequate funding to manage the state through the year - this is the first time the agency has based allocations on the state's budget and performance plan proposal. With that in mind, we will be managing our program allocations in alignment to the State Resource Assessment (SRA) priorities.

We recently met with the Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC) at their annual face-to-face meeting, held in Squaxin Island at Little Creek Casino and Resort. I am so impressed with the work the WATCAC is doing in order to create a Tribal Strategic Plan with the NRCS.

The Tribal Strategic Plan will be NRCS's roadmap for working more effectively with the tribes. We have shared the draft with the Washington tribal councils, and discussed it with the WATCAC several times so that it will reflect tribal and agency perspectives.

The mission, vision, and goals of the Tribal Strategic Plan are:

**Mission:** Achieve culturally appropriate resource management on tribal lands and usual and accustomed areas.

**Vision:** Effective integration of traditional knowledge and practices into NRCS programs and delivery.

**Goal 1:** Provide leadership and coordination for an effective tribal program to uphold trust responsibility to tribes in Washington State. (5 objectives).

**Goal 2:** Improve communications and awareness of NRCS to tribes. (2 objectives).

**Goal 3:** Establish appropriate partnerships with tribes and tribal organizations (2 objectives)

**Goal 4:** Tailor NRCS program delivery for tribes. (3 objectives).

The WATCAC also discussed collecting and incorporating tribal resource concerns into the current SRA, which will give tribal projects more opportunity for funding in fiscal year 2013. The WATCAC has been asked to identify tribal resource concern priorities and acres, and to work with their tribal liaisons that have been provided a strategy to collect the data. The tribal data will be compiled into east and west resource assessments for the WATCAC to review, and then help the agency compile a statewide Tribal Resource Assessment. We look forward to continuing to build stronger relationship with the tribes.



## Improving NRCS Programs for Tribal Participation

**T**he tribes and tribal members of Washington State might be familiar with the challenges and rewards of partnering with NRCS to achieve their conservation goals, but NRCS is not always aware of specific barriers that make conservation planning and program participation difficult for the tribes.

In an effort to better meet tribal needs, Washington NRCS participated in a national Conservation Planning Initiative (CPI) to determine barriers to conservation planning, and to find solutions to any barriers that were identified. The CPI was funded by the NRCS Outreach and Advocacy Division, and focused on four traditional underserved groups in four states: California - Asian Americans, Georgia - African Americans, New Mexico - Hispanics/Latinos, and Washington - American Indians.

Washington NRCS developed a methodology and templates to identify barriers to conservation planning and program participation by tribes and tribal members. With the assistance of NRCS employees and tribal members from across the state, the agency decided that one-on-one interaction would provide the most valuable, reliable, and detailed information. Thirty-one individuals (tribal members, tribal staff, NRCS staff, and a Tribal Conservation District) were interviewed to pinpoint barriers, discuss strategies, and make recommendations to address the barriers.

The responses from those interviewed were very candid, and included a detailed list of barriers that addressed social, cultural, environmental, technical, and economic issues. The responses also included insightful

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## Colville Confederated Tribes work with NRCS to restore Wilmont Creek



*Abandoned fields near Wilmont Creek were turned into areas of perennial grasses and forbs, native shrubs and coniferous trees with the help of the NRCS.*

**T**he Colville Confederated Tribes' (CCT) Wildlife Department is utilizing a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) cost-sharing contract to make major improvements to wildlife habitat in the Wilmont Creek drainage. The WHIP program is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and is intended to provide landowners with targeted financial and technical assistance for high priority wildlife habitat enhancements.

Within the Wilmont Creek drainage was an old abandoned farm with potential riparian and upland habitat that could support a wide variety of species. The CCT Wildlife Department saw the opportunity to turn abandoned fields into areas of perennial grasses and forbs, native shrubs and coniferous trees. The riparian zone could be replanted to native deciduous trees and shrubs. The entire area needed to be fenced off to protect the new plantings from open range cattle, and off-road vehicle use and damage.

The project requires over 19,000 feet of fence, 44,000 trees and shrubs, and 88 acres of

reseeding. The total amount of WHIP funding is over \$152,000, which was the result of special request of funds from NRCS headquarters in Washington D.C. Kelly Singer, CCT Wildlife Biologist, spearheaded the effort to request these funds. Kelly had previous experience working with NRCS cost-sharing programs, and understood how projects were planned and funded. He brought the project to NRCS District Conservationist Dave Kreft as a complete package using NRCS planning practices, and the NRCS payment schedule to estimate the funds needed for the project.

"Because Kelly had previous experience with our programs, he knew what information I needed to make the request for additional WHIP funds," said Kreft. "This type of knowledge of NRCS programs was the key to successfully getting this project funded," Kreft added. "I would encourage all tribal natural resource staff to take the time to learn about our programs in depth. Talk to your local NRCS field office staff, and help them understand your goals. They can show you how NRCS programs can help achieve those goals."



# Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council Update

**D**ue to numerous scheduling conflicts, the November Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC) meeting was postponed to December. Two agenda items: State Plan and Funding pools for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), required immediate action, however, and the group was emailed for comments.

In December, participants discussed NRCS' draft Tribal Strategic Plan, which will be the agency's road map for conservation work with Washington tribes. The proposed mission and vision, respectively, are: "Achieve culturally appropriate resource management on tribal lands, and usual and accustomed areas," and "Effective integration of traditional knowledge and practices into NRCS programs and delivery." Participants also discussed ways to provide NRCS with cultural plant identification for EQIP ranking purposes. Concerns included how the agency will use and protect the information. The group was given updates on training opportunities with NRCS-WA, on changes to the EQIP manual, and the possible reintroduction of the prescribed burning conservation practice.

The January meeting was one of two annual face-to-face meetings. Participants met at Squaxin Island at the Little Creek Casino and Resort where they continued the discussion of NRCS' draft Tribal Strategic Plan, which the agency clarified was not a legal document but guidance for the agency. The group also discussed collecting and incorporating tribal resource concerns with the agency's State Resource Assessment (SRA), which provides a basis for annual funding. The group was provided a time line to complete the data collection this spring. NRCS updated the group on agency efforts to better address aquaculture concerns, the seasonal high tunnel initiative, and the development of the 2012 Farm Bill.

The agency also requested nominations from the Washington tribes to be on the newly forming Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee.

In February, the WATCAC was given updates on the 2012 Farm Bill, the Conservation Planning Initiative (CPI), Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs), and NRCS Practice 590 – Nutrient Management. The group was asked to comment on the CPI and Practice 590. The group continued discussions on the NRCS draft Tribal Strategic Plan and the Tribal Resource Assessment.

To date, twenty tribes have participated in at least one WATCAC meeting: Coeur D'Alene, Colville, Hoh, Jamestown, Kalispel, Lummi, Makah, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Quileute, Quinault, Samish, Shoalwater Bay, Skokomish, Snoqualmie, Squaxin, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Swinomish, Tulalip, and Yakama. Twelve tribes have submitted resolutions for participant and/or representatives: Coeur D'Alene, Colville, Kalispel, Makah, Quinault, Samish, Shoalwater Bay, Snoqualmie, Squaxin, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, and Yakama.

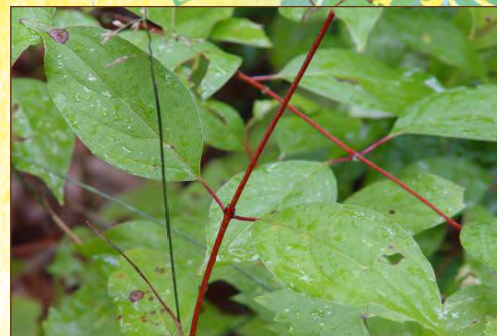
All tribes are welcome to participate in the monthly WATCAC meetings/teleconferences. Those tribes who submit resolutions declaring participation in and appointing representatives to the WATCAC will have voting privileges.

If your tribe is considering participation and/or a resolution, please contact your NRCS tribal liaison:

**East of Cascades – Rebecca Stuart Toupal**  
[rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov](mailto:rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov)

**West of Cascades – Robin Slate**  
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NRCS-WA has a new Tribal Connections link on its [home page](#). From this link, visitors will find information on NRCS programs and tribal activities, including minutes and associated documents from the WATCAC meetings.



*Redosier dogwood continues to be used by Native Americans today, and to retain a culturally significant role in their lives.*

## Spotlight on: Redosier Dogwood

**R**edosier dogwood (*Cornus sericea* ssp. *sericea*), or red willow, is widely distributed from the west coast to the east coast, north to Alaska, and south to Mexico. It is found most typically below 8200' in riparian areas as well as areas that are saturated for some part of the growing season. A semi-fire-tolerant, seed-banking species, redosier dogwood can sprout from surviving roots or stolons, and from the base of aerial stems following fire, but it can be killed by severe fires.

Many Native American tribes in North America used the stems, inner bark, berries, and roots in a variety of ways. Medicinally, the plant was used in decoctions, poultices, and topical applications. Other uses include as a component of smoking mixtures, in ceremonies, for construction and weaving, in dyes, as charms, and in storytelling. Redosier dogwood continues to be used by Native Americans today to retain a culturally significant role in their lives.

Traditional resource management of redosier dogwood included pruning or burning to produce long straight stems. Basket weavers pruned, and sometimes replanted, the stems to encourage straight growth of the next year's basketry material. Prayers of thanks and for permission to gather precede harvesting. Because basket weavers process materials with their hands and mouths, the use of herbicides today around redosier dogwood presents a high health risk for the weavers.

*(Broyles 2005; Densmore 1928; Fischer and Bradley 1987; Fischer and Clayton 1983; Gilmore 1933; Herron 2002; Hoffman 1896; Jones 1861; Meeker, Elias, and Heim 1993; Parminter 1983; Reagan 1928; Rowe 1983; Smith 1933; Stevens and Dozier 2011; Toupal et al. 2006; Turner et al. 1980; White 1965; Yarnell 1964; Zedeño et al. 2000)*



# Native American Rangeland Workshops



Back row (L to R): Richard Aro-CCT Range, Kerry Wilson-CCT Range, Robert Compton-CCT/BIA Range, Linda Mclean-WSU Ext, Luanne Finley-CCT Permittee, William Dick Sr.,-CCT Member and Retired from Range, James McCuen-CCT Land Ops  
Front Row: (L to R): Roy Leith III-CCT Range, Tiny Williams-CCT Range, Will Keller-NRCS, Mathew Pakootas-CCT Range, Bessie Wright-CCT Environmental Trust.

## Get Involved

Do you have a success story, traditional-use plant, or suggestion to share?

Send submissions/suggestions to:  
[rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov](mailto:rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov)

[www.wa.nrcs.gov](http://www.wa.nrcs.gov)



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The Society for Range Management (SRM) held its annual meeting in Spokane, Washington this year. The week-long event included two days of workshops and presentations on Native American rangeland issues. Robert Compton and James McCuen of the Confederated Colville Tribes (CCT) spearheaded the tribal program with assistance from other SRM members across the country. The sessions built on similar activities at SRM's 2011 annual meeting in Billings, Montana, indicating a strong interest in and commitment to Native American rangelands.

The first day provided interaction among the tribes to identify issues and strategies that contribute to a project's success or failure and working toward common solutions. Half of the day involved presentations of Pacific Northwest issues, and the other half was spent in breakout sessions. The issues discussed included:

- National Tribal Horse Coalition - Feral Horses in Indian Country: Jason Smith, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Warm Springs, OR
- Region Updates in Land Management: La Donna Carlisle, BIA, Northwest Region
- Challenges for Recruitment and Training: Joe Peone, Confederated Tribes of the Colville, WA
- Remote Sensing for Rangeland Inventories: Cathy Maynard, NRCS, Helena, MT

- How SRM Can Partner with Native Americans: Jack Alexander, SRM President, Belgrade, MT
- Afternoon: breakout sessions to brainstorm ideas concerned with the Native Range Initiative adopted by the SRM Board of Directors for management of native lands.

The second day provided more tribal perspectives of how programs work on tribal lands. Success stories on tribal lands in the Northwest were highlighted:

- Nez Perce Bio-control Enterprise: Paul Brusven, Nez Perce Tribe
- Stranger Creek Range Project: Luann Finley, Luann Finley and Kristi Horn
- Townsend Range Project: Kristi Horn
- Conservation Diversity on Ft. Hall Tribal Lands: Nate Matlack and Mark Wadsworth, NRCS
- Innovative Approaches to working with Livestock Owners on Navajo Nation
- Lands in Arizona and New Mexico: Leo Watchman, Sr., Director, Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture and Steven Albert, Senior Scientist, Parmetrix, Inc.
- Afternoon: Native American Luncheon & informal opportunity to socialize, visit about programs, etc, & Native Craft Fair

Presenters gave short talks that promoted in-depth discussions of each topic. Following the session was a luncheon and a Native American Craft Fair.

## Improving NRCS Programs for Tribal Participation (cont.)

(continued from page 2)

suggestions and strategies to overcome the barriers. The results of this work have been compiled in a *final document* complete with all of the interviewees' raw responses. A *summary document* also was produced and distributed. These documents highlight changes that need to be made to NRCS's current way of doing business in order to improve tribal program participation.

Another result of this work is support for a second phase, which involves implementing the recommendations put forward by the tribes and NRCS staff of Washington. The *Action Strategy* provides a summary of the recommendations, which are categorized

and grouped by the appropriate levels of implementation. The barriers, estimated costs, recommended leadership, proposed timelines, and desired outcomes will provide guidance to the partners, groups, councils, and/or NRCS staff and offices for implementing each action.

During the coming year, NRCS plans to work with the tribes and others to complete many of the items outlined in the Action Strategy, and to lay the foundation for improved program participation and conservation planning for the tribes and tribal members. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Rebecca Stuart Toupal ([rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov](mailto:rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov)) or Peter Bautista ([peter.bautista@wa.usda.gov](mailto:peter.bautista@wa.usda.gov)).